

February 12, 2013

Testimony in Support of HB 6235 - AN ACT CONCERNING BLIGHT VIOLATIONS

Thank you to all of the members of the Planning and Development Committee for considering my testimony in support of HB 6235, An Act Concerning Blight Violations. My name is Joy Cline Cadwallader and I have lived in the Black Rock section of Bridgeport (Representative Grogin's district), for the past eight years. I provide this testimony, in lieu of my ability to appear before you in Hartford to deliver it personally, to urge you to pass this important piece of legislation.

As is well known, Bridgeport is a city hit hard with the economic downturn this past decade, and in particular these past five years. The city is plagued with abandoned buildings, residences and lots that are an eyesore at best, and a danger to residents at worst.

In our little enclave of Black Rock, we are blessed to be surrounded by good neighbors and friends, but even here we see the scourge of blight. There is a house a block away from where my husband and I are raising our two small children that remains blighted and is not only awful looking, but I believe is a danger to the neighborhood. Our children (6 and 4 yrs. old) call it the "spooky haunted house." It is hard for me to understand why the owners of this otherwise key piece of property have left it to fall into such disrepair that it really does look like a nightmare. The windows are boarded up, the breezeway that once led to a garage is a ragged, sharp, splintered mess since the garage collapsed sometime last year. If the investors who own this property had to look at this every time they left their house, maybe they'd do something about it. But there it stands, out of view of the people who own it, and in plain sight of all of us in the neighborhood. It is likely that it will stay like this forever, until something is done about it.

I believe this piece of legislation will give us the tool in the tool-box we need to effect positive change for our neighborhood, for the bigger part of Bridgeport and for all areas of Connecticut that are suffering with little recourse from slumlords who won't and don't do anything to clean up their properties. This law will enable the municipality to recover blight liens and fines by holding property owners personally responsible for blight violations. This will also help prevent those individuals from purchasing a piece of property who may be tempted to allow it to become or remain in disrepair.

Please consider this bill as if a property next door to your own personal residence or place of business were falling apart, filled with wild animals, rodents and insects, or worse, squatters with intentions of using the structure for manufacture of illegal street drugs. Blighted properties are a significant problem in our neighborhood and have a tremendously negative impact on our community.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Joy Cline Cadwallader
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